

She's Leaving Home
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CAST: 3 (2f, 1 m)*

Eloise (female) age 18-20; caring daughter at wits end

Luanne (female) age 36-42; needy mother

Jess (male) 19-25; cook – maybe chef

SYNOPSIS: Eloise has been taking care of her mother – actually taking care of everything since she was a child and finds it's time to strike out on her own.

*You may change the gender of the characters to fit specific needs and change any necessary pronouns.

The short play takes place over many years but it should be continuous action. ELOISE leaves her mother at one specific spot on the stage. Mid-stage, she meets with JESS. And on the next third of the stage she leaves JESS. At the end she is back where she started.

LIGHTS UP on ELOISE standing with a suitcase. LUANNE is seated in a chair. There are takeout boxes around her and maybe some bottles or empty glasses. Center stage, there is a small desk and a chair or two chairs. At the end of the stage is a chair or two. You are welcome to change the setting – just make it simple with no set changes.

LUANNE

You're really leaving. I've fed you and clothed you and this is how you thank me?

ELOISE

You fed me and clothed me until I was about ten, Mom. The last eight years, I've been taking care of you.

LUANNE

I did the best I could.

ELOISE

I did too, Mom. And now I need to see if I can do even better. Carol will check in on you. The social worker will be here Monday to make sure everything is in order. You're in good hands. Oh! And the exterminator is coming at 2 p.m. The bugs are getting bad again. Make sure you let him in.

LUANNE

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ELOISE

Anything you want to say before I go?

LUANNE

You want to leave? Leave already!

ELOISE

Mom?

LUANNE

Just go.

(ELOISE picks up her suitcase and heads towards the center of the stage. She stops, takes out a blazer from her suitcase and puts it on. She takes out a resume. Meanwhile, JESS enters with a salad bowl and goes to the two chairs or desk and chair. ELOISE walks over and hands her resume to JESS.)

JESS

Not a lot of experience.

ELOISE

I've been chief chef and bottle washer for over eight years. I can do this job in my sleep.

JESS

I intend to grow the business. I'm just starting out and I have a lot at stake. And ... I can't pay much. Yet. Still, you really need to know your stuff.

(Indicating a salad bowl.)

What's this?

ELOISE

Arugula.

JESS

This?

ELOISE

Not quite oregano ... must be marjoram.

JESS

And this?

ELOISE

Don't insult me. The aroma gives it away. Fennel.

JESS

Can you poach an egg?

ELOISE

Poached, hard-boiled, soft-boiled, somewhere in-between for ramen noodles, fried, scrambled, over easy, medium, hard/

JESS

When can you start?

ELOISE

In five minutes.

JESS

Tie your hair back. I'll get you the menu to learn and an apron.

(JESS exits and ELOISE does a "happy dance." JESS returns with apron. ELOISE ties her hair back and puts on the apron and goes to work. JESS exits. ELOISE can be chopping, mixing – whatever can be mimed easily. JESS checks on her. HE smiles. SHE smiles and continues to work. Time passes.)

JESS (cont'd)

The summer salad with the sweet peas is a hit. Throw in some of the pea tendrils for visual interest.

(JESS goes to check on inventory or reservation list. JESS smiles and chops. JESS comes forward.)

JESS (cont'd)

That strawberry-pretzel pie is a bit kitschy but the customers are gobbling it up. Continue to make it until strawberry season ends.

(JESS moves away. JESS smiles and adds a spice to a bowl. JESS watches.)

JESS (cont'd)

Should you be putting that much nutmeg in the Ragu?

ELOISE

Trust me.

JESS (cont'd)

We're now taking reservations for two months out. This is amazing. I think we should expand.

ELOISE

Not yet.

JESS

Trust me.

(Time passes.)

(JESS takes off his apron and/or hat. He goes and sits on his chair. There could be take-out boxes, empty bottles, empty glasses – in short similar to what LUANNE had in the opening.)

ELOISE

We did it once. We can do it again.

JESS

It's a lot of work.

ELOISE

You can do it.

JESS

I may not want to.

ELOISE

Then, what do you want? Because sitting around moaning about your life is not a life. The unemployment runs out soon. Then, what?

JESS

You can work and I can ... clean house.

ELOISE

I don't think cleaning is your strong point.

JESS

I'll clean it all up tomorrow. You'll see.

ELOISE

I'm not doing this again. I swore when I left home that if I had to look after anyone – it would be a child. (Beat.) Or a cat.

JESS

I'm allergic.

ELOISE

We're getting bugs. I'll call the exterminator tomorrow. And while I'm at it, I'll have a social worker come over.

JESS

You're going to extremes.

ELOISE

No, I know how this ends. I don't want to leave you without options.

JESS

Leave me?

ELOISE

Yes, leave you.

JESS

And do what?

ELOISE

Start again.

(JESS turns away. ELOISE exits. LUANNE enters and sits in her chair. JESS exits.
ELOISE enters with a suitcase.)

ELOISE (cont'd)

Hello, Ma. Been a while.

LUANNE

Are you back to stay? Because I don't need anyone to take care of me. I'm fine on my own.

ELOISE

But I need someone to take care of me. I'm not fine.

(LUANNE and ELOISE stare at each other as the lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

ELOISE

It's the depression speaking.

JESS

It's the years of exhaustion.

ELOISE

We expanded too early.

JESS

Here it comes! The "I told you so" moment.

